

## The Principle of Indwelling

Now this morning I want to talk about what I would call the principle of indwelling.

That may not be a good theological title, but as we go along, I'm sure you will understand what I mean.

And even though we are going to concentrate on this principle in the spiritual sense, it is one that is quite prominent in God's physical creation.

For instance, inside the tiny seed there is the mighty tree.

In fact, Jesus referred to this marvellous phenomenon in one of His parables.

Mark 4: 30-32 **"To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? *It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds***

on earth; "but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade."

And ladies, when your busy husband tends to forget something you asked him to do, even after several reminders, don't be too hard on him.

Just remember that stately oak, with its majestic branches spreading out over the green earth, was probably planted by an absent-minded squirrel.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

And then there's the miracle of progeneration, a miracle by which sons and daughters are born generation after generation into the human family.

And, although I cannot explain it,  
progeneration seems to be another example  
of indwelling.

At least that's the argument the writer of  
Hebrews used to prove the superiority of  
Melchizedek's priesthood over the  
Levitical.

First of all, he refers to an established  
principle, that the lesser pays tithes to  
the greater.

And then He makes this statement, in Hebrews  
7:9-10---"**Even Levi, who receives tithes,  
paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak,  
for he was still in the loins of his  
father when Melchizedek met him.**"

As you know, Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac  
begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Levi.

Three generations, and yet Levi was "**in the  
loins of his father** (actually his great  
grandfather) **when Melchizedek met him.**"

And I'm sure we could find other examples of the principle of indwelling in God's creation, but we will stop here.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

For you see, what I would really like to talk about this morning is the principle of indwelling as it applies spiritually. And the first thing we will look at is our position in Christ, and how it relates to our salvation.

For instance, Romans 3:24 speaks of---"**being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**"

And then, in Ephesians 2:3 we read---"**But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**"

So, what does it mean to be "**justified freely,**" and how does this new position

of being "**brought near**" to a holy God  
depend upon being "**in Christ**"?

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

And then, in the second half of our lesson I  
would like to consider the implications  
of Christ being in us.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

But first of all, what is the connection  
between our salvation and being in  
Christ?

Certainly, when we think about God's plan of  
salvation, the first thing that comes to  
mind is that great principle of  
substitution.

We see it foreshadowed in Abel's acceptable  
sacrifice, the Passover Lamb, and the  
many Levitical offerings.

Yes, God has repeatedly told us that we need  
a substitute.

Mankind has fallen **"short of the glory of God."**

And it is a substitute that God has provided.

His Son **"became flesh and dwelt among us"** for the express purpose of being our substitute.

Yes, **"once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."**

And 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that as Christ voluntarily hung upon that cross, God **"---made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us."**

That's substitution, isn't it?

Yes, not only did He die for us, but He died as us.

And then V21 goes on to say---**"that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."**

That's the other side of the coin, isn't it?

Yes, God sees us as righteous because He  
sees us **"in Him."**

That's indwelling, isn't it?

And because He sees us **"in Him,"** God can **"be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."** Romans 3: 26.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

And I don't think any study of this blessed condition of being in Christ would be complete without referring to that place of refuge found in Genesis.

Genesis 6:13-15 **"And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth."Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. "And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred**

**cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits."**

Here we see God's judgment and God's mercy. His judgment was universal, but His mercy was very specific.

V 15 says **"And this is how you shall make it:"**

No, Noah wasn't the architect. He was only the carpenter.

Just like Moses who was specifically told to build the tabernacle **"According to all that I show you,"** so Noah was to build the Ark according to God's specifications.

In both cases, the Divine Architect was designing a structure that would picture His Son.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

But Noah was more than a carpenter.



During those 120 years, **"while the ark was being prepared,"** he was **"a preacher of righteousness."**

And he was a preacher with an unbelievable message.

He was warning people about a universal flood in a world that had *never seen rain*.

Genesis 2:6 tells us ---**"a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground,"** and I suspect this method of irrigation was still in effect.

There are several reasons for believing this, but we won't go into them now.

But the point is, Moses' warning was suspect, and so was his method of escape.

Yes, he was building a giant ship on dry land.

And I'm sure you can see the parallel between his situation and ours.

In fact, Paul says ---"**the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**"

And I can almost hear the heckling Noah had to endure.

*Hey, Noah! It's going to take an awful lot of mist to float a boat like that!*

And not only was his message unbelievable, but his results were mediocre.

*Hey, Noah! How many people have you persuaded to get into that box of yours?*

*Did I hear seven?*

*Seven converts in nearly 120 years, and weren't they your own family?*

*Wouldn't it be a good idea to change your message to something, say, more geared to the times?*

*You'll never fill your ark with a story like that.*

But filling the ark really wasn't Noah's responsibility.

He was **"a preacher of righteousness."**

His responsibility was to preach the message God had given him, and to build the ark according to God's specifications.

And I think it's time we got back to those specifications.

Genesis 6:14 **"Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch."**

No doubt this pitch was some sort of tar that was applied to the ark to keep out the water.

But there's more involved here than just tar.

You see, the Hebrew word Kâphar, that is translated pitch in V 14, has another meaning.

It can also be translated "atonement," which means to cover or to reconcile.

So, both practically and symbolically, the pitch was able to keep out the flood waters of God's judgment.

Yes, because of that wonderful provision of atonement, God could extend His mercy to all who were inside the ark.

And did you notice the pitch was applied on the inside as well as the outside?

As we've already noted, that which was on the outside had both a practical and spiritual significance.

It was for the eyes of God, but that which was on the inside was for the eyes of man.

It would be a constant reminder that the flood waters of God's judgment would never touch Noah and his family.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Now I don't want to stray too far from considering the Ark as a type of Christ, but I might just take this little detour. Some commentators have seen a very practical reason why the Ark was coated on both sides.

They believe it was God's way of preserving the Ark over a long period of time.

And when you think about it, it almost appears that God had that agenda in view.

For instance, if we had been given the choice of where the Ark would end up, we would've chosen a fertile valley for its final destination.

That way Noah could have disassembled it and used its giant timbers for much needed building materials.

But God landed the Ark high up in a mountain where the air was thin and the temperatures inhospitable.

As a result Noah had to abandon it leaving it intact.

And according to several reports, the Ark is still up there, encased in the ice.

Perhaps, and of course this is only speculation, perhaps God's plan is that we discover the Ark in our day as a testimony to the Genesis account.

And speaking of the Genesis account, I think it's time we got back to it.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Genesis 6:15 **"And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits."**

Assuming a cubit to be 18 inches, the dimensions of the ark would be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high.

And even if the dimensions are not completely accurate, the ratio of 6 to 1,

between length and width, is very significant.

Not surprisingly, it is a ratio followed by modern-day ocean liners.

And when a model of the ark was tested in a wave tank, it proved to be capable of withstanding tremendous waves.

So, even from a practical point of view, it was a good job Noah didn't tinker with the plans.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

V 16 **"You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it *with* lower, second, and third *decks*."**

Other than this window, which was about 18'' square and facing upwards, there is no indication that there were any other windows in the side of the ark.

Now that would indicate a couple of things. First of all, it meant Noah's family would not have to endure the agony of seeing their neighbours in their last frantic moments of struggle, and the awful scene of death thereafter.

But what is perhaps more significant from a spiritual point of view is that those inside the ark never saw God's flood waters of judgment.

And it is my belief that those in Christ will never see the great tribulation.

In fact, Romans 8:1 says **"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

But, what would they see?



What would those in the ark see through that little 18 inch window in the top of the ark?

Well, on a clear day - and don't forget it only rained for 40 days during their year-long sojourn in the ark - on a clear day they would see God's heaven, and that speaks to us of prayer.

But it is also a picture of what our minds should be filled with on a daily basis.

Certainly we must be concerned for the lost, but our thoughts shouldn't be focused on the world around us.

It's a world that is reeling out of control, and it is a world that is approaching God's judgment.

No, we should keep our eyes on the window.

**"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of**

**God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."** Colossians 3:1-2

Oh, I know, the ride might be rough at times.

And I'm sure Noah and his family didn't always have a smooth ride either.

Just remember, everything that touches you has touched Christ first, and in the Ark, your destination is sure.

So, keep your eyes on the pitch, and focus your mind on the window.

**"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."** Philippians 4:6-7

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

And what would God see when He looked down  
from heaven?

Well, He would see a wicked generation who  
had ignored His warnings and mocked His  
offer of mercy for 120 years.

And even though He has **"no pleasure in the  
death of the wicked,"** the time had come  
for judgment.

However, as the waters poured down on their  
heads and swirled around their feet, it  
also beat upon the ark with equal force.

And where did the ark end up after those 40  
days of judgment?

Do we find it bumping along on the bottom of  
the ocean?

Oh no.

It had risen victorious over sin and death,  
and those inside had risen with it.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

And what would God see through that little window as He looked down from heaven?

Well, He would see all those who had entered the door by faith.

Yes, by faith.

When He had asked them to "**Come into the ark,**" there had been no sign of a flood.

Had they waited to walk by sight, they would have found the door closed.

And there are other things about this door that are significant.

In a ship that was 450 feet long, with 3 decks, and was to be loaded with animals, there was only *one* door.

Wouldn't it be more practical to have several doors?

I'm sure that thought crossed Noah's mind, but he didn't change it.

No, like the ark itself, the door spoke of Christ, and He is the *only* way of escaping God's judgment.

And He made that point very clear when He said---"**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**"

And you might have noticed there weren't any dimensions given for the door.

We know the size of the ark, the size of the window, but the door is without measure.

And God's mercy through Jesus Christ is without measure.

Oh, I know, Jesus said "**narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life,**" but that was only because of man's stubborn will.

In fact, in Noah's day, only seven individuals found it.

But in truth, God's mercy is without measure.

In truth, **"whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."**

However, even though its size is unlimited, the period of time in which it will be open is not.

And in Noah's day, that period of time was very precise.

**"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month"---"the LORD shut him in."**

That meant two things.

Those inside the ark were eternally secure, and those outside the ark were eternally lost.

And it was never opened again.

Genesis 8:13 says, when **"the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and**

**indeed the surface of the ground was  
dry."**

What a picture that would make.

Here we see Noah and his family standing in  
a new world, so to speak, and the ark  
with the wounded side standing behind  
them.

And who would we see in that picture?

Well, Genesis 8:16 tells us there was Noah  
and his wife, his sons, and his sons'  
wives.

No more and no less.

There had been no births and no burials at  
sea.

And in Jesus Christ, there are no second  
generation Christians, and no one who has  
lost his salvation along the way.

And that's what it means to be in Christ.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

But there's another beautiful aspect of this principle of indwelling.

And it's a principle that God Himself has personally participated in.

Yes, 2 Corinthians 5:19 tells us---"**God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.**"

In a way, that might seem quite surprising.

Surely the Son of God, Who is an equal member of the Godhead, would have relied on His own resources, but He didn't.

In fact, He began His public ministry by being "**led by the Spirit into the wilderness.**"

And from the cradle to the cross, and even beyond that, His every move was directed by His Heavenly Father.

So much so, that Jesus was astounded when Phillip said, "**Lord, show us the Father.**"



**"Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? (And now, listen to His words) "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works."**

Yes, that was the way Jesus operated, and if His disciples were going to accomplish anything at all, that's the way they would have to operate.

And so, that night in the upper room, Jesus introduced them to a new way of living. First of all, He told them about a request He was going to make on their behalf.

John 14:16-17 **"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- "the**

**Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."**

Yes, just like the Old Testament Saints, the disciples must have experienced the Holy Spirit's presence dwelling with them.

But *this* would be something new.

As Jesus told them, "**He dwells with you and will be in you.**"

And then He told them about His own personal indwelling.

V18 "**I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.**"

Yes, in a physical sense, He would be leaving.

As He said---"**A little while longer and the world will see Me no more.**"

But in a spiritual sense, He wouldn't be leaving at all.

As He assured them---"you will see Me.

**Because I live, you will live also."**

And then, in V 20, He opens up the principle of indwelling a little further---"**At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."**

The Father, the Son, and now the believer. That is the way the church age was to be energized.

That was important, and so important that Jesus continued to emphasize it on the way to Gethsemane.

John 15: 1-5 **"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot**

**bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."**

It's a case of double abiding, isn't it, and it's very important.

It's not, as some are teaching today, a factor in our salvation, but it is essential for fruit bearing.

And I am sure there's a great deal more that could be said about abiding in Christ.

But at this point, I must focus the rest the lesson on the importance of Christ abiding in us.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Certainly we are all familiar with *The Acts of the Apostles*.

What we might not know is that this title in our English Bibles is not part of God's inspired word.

It has been added by the editor.

And in this case, it doesn't appear that they have chosen a very descriptive title.

Certainly Peter and Paul's activities are well recorded, but there is almost nothing said about the acts of the rest of the apostles.

A much better title would have been the Acts of the Holy Spirit, and even more specifically, the Acts of Jesus Christ through His church.

For, indeed, that is what the book is all about.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

As I'm sure you realize Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.

And in his opening sentence in Acts, he refers to his Gospel.

In Acts 1:1 "**The former account** (That's referring to the Gospel of Luke) **I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,**"---and so on.

So then, Luke records what "**Jesus began both to do and teach,**" while Acts records what He continued to do and to teach *through* the church.

And what is particularly interesting is the fact that the book of Acts doesn't seem to end.

The last two verses simply tell us "---**Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching**

**the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him."**

And that's it.

There's nothing about his trial or his execution.

And I think the reason why Acts doesn't seem to end, is because it hasn't ended.

Jesus will keep on doing and teaching until His bride is completed, and He wants to do it through us.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

As you know, the human hand is a marvellous instrument.

Depending on the training and natural abilities of its owner, it can operate large machinery, build houses, play beautiful music, or even perform delicate operations.

Well, this morning, I have brought along a variety of hand coverings.

There is this mitten with only a thumb.

It can keep you warm while operating the snow blower, but don't try to eat your supper with it on.

You'll spill your coffee, and your knife and fork will end up on the floor.

And then there is the glove, which has a thumb and four fingers.

That's a little better, but when it comes to hand control, there is still a lot to be desired.

And then there is the latex glove, which is used in surgery.

It protects the surgeon from any disease the patient might have, and it protects the patient from any germs that might be on the surgeon's hands.

And in a way, they are all quite similar.



The hand could say to each one of them,  
*Without me, you can do nothing.*

But when it comes to dexterity, the ability of the hand to function, they are quite different.

And if you look at the two extremes, that is the mitten and the latex glove, it will be obvious where the difference lies.

It is a difference in conformity.

With the mitten, there's so much of self and so little of hand.

Just a thumb and no more.

But with the latex glove, there is total conformity.

And it's not just the fact that it has fingers.

The glove has that, but it's not like the latex glove.

The latex glove is willing to *stretch* and  
*mold* itself until every knuckle and every  
curve are faithfully reproduced.

It's almost as if it's not even there.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

So, what about us?

We don't want to be mittens, do we?

So much of self and so little of Christ.

And maybe we've met just a few Christians  
who bear a striking resemblance to a  
boxing glove!

Now that's really sad, isn't it?

And then, of course, we can settle for being  
gloves.

We'll let Christ have a certain amount of  
control in our lives, but not all.

That's not God's will either.

No, God's program for every believer is laid  
out in Romans 8:24---"**For whom He  
foreknew, He also predestined to be**

**conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."**

Yes, He wants us to be latex gloves.

He wants to *stretch* and *mold* us until we bear the image of His Son.

And for your encouragement, I would like to conclude with the testimony of a man who could only be described as one of God's choice latex gloves.

Of course, I'm referring to the Apostle Paul, and he wrote---"**I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."**